NEWS AND COMMENT IN THE WORLD OF ART

By HENRY McBRIDE.

THE collection of Octave Mirbeau, the writer, is to be sold on February 24 in the Durand-Ruel Galleries in Paris. Without doubt this event will agitate considerably all the ateliers on both sides of the Seine, for the collection is not only famous but "advanced." The artists are those most talked about when artists meet. But at the same time the great, ignorant buying public is only as yet but half aware of these modern art celebrities, so the prices these sculptures and paintings will fetch present interesting problems to those "askers and trippers" who fringe the art world and who are always asking "Which way?" when confronted with the fluctuations of the market.

From the catalogue, which has just come over, the following note has been extracted:

"The propagandism of Octave Mirbeau in favor of artists—to-day illustrious—who because of their distinct originality were exposed to incomprehension and hostility is one of the most attractive aspects of the influence he exercised upon the ideas of his epoch.

"His passionate feeling for Monet, Renoir, Cezanne, Pissarro, Van Gogh, Rodin, Maillol and others more recent manifested itself in other ways than in writings and speeches; he collected their works, and as he knew how to choose the frankest, most pointed, most revealing pieces no collection yet assembled by other amateurs offers such a typical reflection of the modern movement.

"He painted sometimes himself in his hours of leisure. It was to him but a means of relaxation and no personal canvases figure in the sale; yet a such a difficult judge as Claude Monet looked on them with favor two of them are reproduced in the catalogue : being possibly of interest to admirers of the great writer now gone.

"The collection formed by Octave Mirbeau, with its many masterpieces, Mme. Mirbeau would have loved to have kept, but recently she conceived a charmingly generous project—to transform the house of Cheverchement which Mirbeau had erected in such a striking environment and where he wrote his last books into a vacation house for writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, &c., who may be in need. To assure the working of the plan considerable capital is necessary, and for this motive the collection that was put together with so much love is to be separated."

Admirable as is the motive, it does seem, in truth, a pity to disperse this collection; at least, just now. A fine collection put together by instinct and genius is almost more of a miracle than the production of the masterpieces, and always has a stimulating effect upon the community even when it is kept private. Thousands of good people in Boston feel a pride in the galleries of Mrs. Jack Gardner, who have never crossed her portal, but get a more tangible benefit from it because of its effect upon the public servants, museum directors and experts, who are permitted to study it. Mrs. Gardner, however, with all due respect, is not progressive; she lives in the—I don't know which, but a remote century ago. I don't see any one on this side of the water who is, or at least who is openly, progressive. There are one or two whom I suspect of it in private, but they are like the professors and clergymen whom Stephen Leacock knows, who both smoke and drink and for some strange reason do not at present care to say so. There may not be the same "conspiracy of silence" in art as on the drink question, but there is the same hesitancy to act.

This is the more strange in that as a nation we seem to respond with astonishing quickness to fashion, and however the savants may laugh at fashion everybody knows that there is nothing really laughable about fashion except when it is followed at too great a distance from the source. Since we haven't produced our own, we are still obliged to get our modes from Paris, and so it is laughable perhaps to see that our collectors cannot get any nearer to the times we live in than forty years ago. There is a house I know of that does for impressionism what Mrs. Gardner does for the renaissance, and what Octave Mirbeau did for the era that ended with the war; but say what you like impressionism and the renaissance are no longer active forces and there is no one in society here that seems to get collectors fun from the new manifestations. I can't say that I should like to see the Mirbeau collection brought over en bloc. That would be too tame a way to get ourselves up to date. I sigh chiefly to think that we must continue to be provincial, and that there is no private collection in town to which inquiring minds can turn for hope and guidance upon the problems of the day.

And as for the museum directors, heavens! There isn't one in the country who yet knows that Van Gogh was a man of genius. And even more laughable, if you insist upon laughing, is the attitude of the public art custodian towards Cezanne. The experts of this Paris sale, who know their business well, have placed the fourteen Cezannes first on the list. Two of them are self portraits of the usual direct, unflattering, un-self-conscious Cezanne kind; one is a landscape with the peculiarly agreeable modern qualities for which no critic has as yet found an adequate term, and a number are superb still lifes. Cezanne did an enormous number of still lifes, but he is one among the moderns who did not do too many. He was not only always interested, but always discovering new relationships, so that his still lifes, in spite of their number, are never monotonous. The Mirabeau examples are especially vigorous and fresh.

Both the Van Goghs are excellent, but this painter's "Pere Tanguy" is the sort of portrait that art lovers take journeys to see. Then there is a series of superb drawings by Rodin, rhythmic and at the same time profoundly dramatic; a number of sculptures by Maillol, all of which should be secured for America, where this master is insufficiently known; a curious and strong portrait by Vallotton, a charming drawing by Constantin Guys, and in addition to those of Renoir, Monet, Pissarro and Daumier there are works by Henry-Edmond Cross, Gauguin, Maurice Denis, Manguin, Seurat, Signat, Viullard and last but not least Bonnard.

Altogether, the list is significant, is it not?

Camels, Koran-readers and a U. S. Penny.

There is very little in a name, particularly in New York, where one can go to court and for a trifling sum be changed in a jiffy from Einzenschwimmer to the more businesslike Brown, but for all that, most people who go to the Arlington Art Galleries to study the paintings of Nicolas S. Macsoud will have a slight surprise in discovering that this gentleman is not Scotch but Syrian. Mr. Macsoud, in fact, was born on Mount Lebanon in 1884. Although he has backslid from the faith of his fathers, as so many of us New Yorkers are apt to do, and is no longer a practising Mohammedan, he nevertheless cherishes the traditions and customs of his native soil and never tires of putting them on canvas.

In particular, he celebrates in a most astonishing way the peculiar Oriental habit of looking long at a coin, and in one of his miniatures he has painted a United States penny with such fidelity to the lovely details that even the Einzenschwimmers and the Browns might jolly well accept it as change. Even more successful is a miniature of a postmarked postage stamp, with the original stamp side by side with the painting. I vow I was completely fooled, and couldn't tell t'other from which.

Among the compositions there were

"The Music Lesson," by Pieter De Hooch, from the collection of John N. Willys; in the Lotos Club exhibition.

"The Man With the Wineglass," by Velasquez; owned by Edward Drummond Libbey of Toledo; in the Lotos Club exhibition.

of course glimpses of the desert, with camels; and glimpses of Oriental business men regaling themselves with coffee, smoke and readings from the Koran; but there were, alas, no glimpses of that mysterious institution, the harem. However, I will confess that at the time of my visit to the gallery there were eight young women of more than usual comeliness (brunettes and heavily lashed and lidded eyes), who were fluttering here and there, simply devouring the pictures. They adored the penny picture; they went into ecstacies over the camels and the Koran readers, and somehow I felt that they could have enlightened me in regard to the harem itself had I asked them. But there were eight of them, and newspaper men are not always courageous, in spite of what people say; and so I came away and have not been back there since.

Justice Where Justice Is Due.

Mr. McBride.

Dear Fellow Citizen: In to-day's article of yours on Mr. Adams's book, you casually say that among Americans only Walt Whitman has broached sex in his works.

Preposterous as your ignorance of American literature is, I will forgive you. You have forgotten that Louis M. Ellshemius is the frankest writer on sex in its beautiful side in all America. I mail to you "Inspirations," which will give to you a mere *glimpse* of what I mean.

It is very sad that no one eulogizes me as they do Whitman, who was a very *infant* on sex matters. My 100 volumes on women and virgins are unequalled in the world, past and present. If you are unacquainted with my works, literary and in painting—do not publish to the world that Whitman is the only writer who was not ashamed to touch on the question of sex, but brass band it to all that the greatest writer and painter of woman and virginity is

LOUIS M. ELLSHEMIUS.

Greatest of all, yet unknown to all. Amen.

You wrong me, Mr. Ellshemius. It was not I, but the late Henry Adams who was ignorant of your merits. All my life I have been an assiduous reader of THE SUN—even before I joined its staff in the humble capacity of art critic—and have read your published letters and have realized that you were the greatest of all on science, sex and art—that you were, in a word, peerless. I shall await receipt of your 100 volumes on woman and virginity with, I need hardly say, breathless expectancy. Permit me to thank you in advance.

The Glory That Was Camouflaged.

I am sometimes puzzled by the activities of the Brooklyn Museum as they are related in the Brooklyn Museum's *Quarterly*, but am never bored. To tell the truth, I love the Brooklyn Museum *Quarterly*, and largely for its sake I love the Brooklyn Museum. They seem to have a good time, those connected with that museum, and when the officials have a good time with the art then outsiders are apt to think that art is not a thing to be despised.

So I am not at all sure what "bluefishing" has to do with the Brooklyn Museum, but Robert Cushman Murphy's article on the subject in the *Quarterly* is so delightfully written that any amount of museums could be excused for existing if they produced such articles. Incidentally he gives this most graphic pen picture of a convoy of camouflaged transports which he saw from the deck of the schooner Martin while bluefishing.

"But next day the great, unforgettable privilege was not denied us. The dawn of the 9th broke clear after a rather tempestuous night, and by the middle of the forenoon the sea was dead calm. The sun shone with all the warmth of summer, and the water, hitherto greenish on the Ambrose banks, now took on an almost tropical ultramarine hue. The Martin lay becalmed a mile inside the lightship, with all her dories in service over a considerable expanse of the shining sea.

"Shortly before noon a formation of planes came humming out of the lower bay, and behind them a number of the pestiferous scout patrols. The Martin, however, was lying motionless, with gently slatting sails, and it may not have occurred to any of the navy's young Lieutenant-Commanders that the dingy smack possessed an engine which might have pushed her out of the path of the convoy within a very few minutes. At any rate, for once they ignored us, and we turned our attention to the glissant, pink and black destroyer, which was the next unit in the procession. Just as six broad beamed mine sweepers, which had evidently issued from the bay during the previous night, came ploughing back in pairs, we began to see exceptional clouds of smoke in the direction of the distant Narrows, and soon we made out the hulks of large steamships.

"The President's Mayflower could not have been more fortunately placed than our little schooner. As the group of transports drew near, the leaders parted,and the whole fleet passed on either side of us, as if in review, only a few lengths away. They were fourteen British steamships, each fancifully and uniquely camouflaged, and all laden to overflowing with soldiers who are the hope of a world. The men crammed every deck, and even the superstructure and the piles of life rafts were crowded like bleachers at a ball game. On the topmost places stood little gatherings of trim looking officers who, like the troops, were wearing overseas campaign caps. Every soul on the fourteen ships, excepting the British naval officers, appeared to have a small life preserver round his neck.

"Bands on the afterdecks of the transports were playing lilting music, and the boys in olive drab, no less than a contingent of Red Cross nurses on one of the vessels, were thrilled by the great venture that they were now beginning. They waved and shouted answers to our feeble but heartfelt hail from the tiny Martin, and still more they cheered the pilots of the hilarious planes and of the huge dirigible balloon, which, looking like nothing but a gigantic metal cocoon, flew from steamer to steamer, the observer craning over the side of his basket and gesticulating bon voyage. Two by two the components of this overwhelming spectacle passed us, bow and stern. Northumberland, Elpenor, Walmer Castle and Empress of Asia were some of the ghosts of names which still showed vaguely through the palimpsest of camouflage. A destroyer, and a familiar blimp a thousand feet in air, brought up the rear of this armada of freedom, and, for aught I know, the balloon may have been towed clear across the Atlantic, for we saw it no more.

"After the passing of the transports I sought to quell a restless longing by lowering a dory into the warm, quiet sea and rowing alone beyond the outskirts of the field of fishing boats. Here and there bands of large shearwaters, migrants from breeding grounds in the Azores, were floating as if asleep. As I approached stern foremost a group of seven, one bird set its wings against the scarcely perceptible breeze and allowed itself to be wafted backward on the water so that it receded as rapidly as I drifted toward the flock; but the others rested stupidly until I was almost upon them, and one of them gave its weird, musical cry of two organ pipe notes, as it took to flight.

"The skyline, very near owing to my sea level point of view, was dotted with great steamers, most of which moved slowly, as though awaiting their pilots. But how diverse they were! Here the French liner Aden, exemplifying a procedure which has made the practice of the marine camoufleur one of the most startling visual developments of the great war, appliqued with curlicues and disharmonic patterns intended to deceive, dazzle or obliterate, or to circumvent the revelations of an enemy range finder; there a steamer painted in monochrome and blazoned with the cross of the Belgian Relief. Yonder was a third labelled 'Schweiz,' for the submarine has compelled even the cantons of the Alps to become maritime; and the German spelling of the national name might be least infuriating to a periscope eye. 'Amsterdam,' proclaimed a fourth steamer, and 'Danmark' another.

"How strange it seemed that on this dreamy, peaceful sea one ship should be blotched like a patch quilt or should make a zigzag track, with covered lights, along the broad highways of the Atlantic, while another docked her sides in exaggerated and artificial brilliancy and put her trust perforce in a neutral flag and name! And how many fair craft of both the first and the second classes have failed either to elude or to placate the inscrutable foes of all who go down to the sea in ships."

"Three Listeners," by Aug. Vincent Tack; C. W. Kraushaar Art Galleries.

"Wounded Royal Irish Fusilier," by Sir William Orpen. Official British art at Anderson Galleries.

War Paintings by French Soldiers

An exhibition of war paintings made by French soldiers has been placed on view in the beautiful galleries of Gimpel & Wildenstein. For this catalogue Alice Rouiller writes the following appreciation:

In those sombre days of 1914, France, whose noble standard proclaims equality, was loath to establish any distinction between her patriotic sons. To the intellectual, the geniuses, the peasant alike she tendered a musket and pointed to the frontier. They left, all stirred by the same affection for the beloved nations and in the full consciousness of a sacred duty assumed of free men.

To many whose age placed them beyond the claims of conscription the added burden of individual decision presented itself. In this connection nothing was more poignant than the problem of the artist.

To him departure for war entailed a twofold sacrifice. He offered not only his life to his country, but something to him far more precious, the vision within him of imperishable beauty, consciousness of which, in the artist transcends all, sustains him in the face of every alien element in life. To him the possibility of passing on before that bit of him which is immortal has become through the medium of his choice a part of the world's heritage, is to envisage an anguish of soul beyond the experience of ordinary men.

To these artist soldiers who made the supreme decision, the world is now indebted for these amazing drawings and paintings of the war. They constitute certainly the most extraordinary record of its kind ever brought together. All the more remarkable when the conditions under which they were executed are made known. Conditions always difficult, often terrible.

There are sketches made in the trenches at two paces from the enemy, in the mud, amidst the roar of cannon; more ambitious compositions executed behind the lines, some times in hospital or German prison camps. There are satirical drawings, ample proof of the Frenchman's flexibility of spirit which never deserts him, even in the face of death. All of these records have been lived and come from eyewitnesses of the greatest drama of all time.

To posterity these documents, which are truth, will prove treasures of incalculable value. They will make it possible for artists of the future to share in all that this formidable war has held of sensation and experience for those of the present generation.

One fact is incontestable: the soldier alone is capable of visualizing for all time the picturesque intensity of this war, the very engines of which are changing from day to day.

To give expression to all the suffering of the poilu in the trenches, it must have been shared; the crushing weight of the pack, the bitterness of cold, hunger, mud, vermin and the anguish of bombardments must have been borne.

A glance at the names in the catalogue, which contains many of the foremost in the realm of French art, confirms the suspected sacrifices made by the contributers to this exhibition; for citations and deeds of heroism follow one upon the other in quick succession from the first page to the last.

Old Masters to Travel.

There are lots of worthy and energetic people in the art world who would love to do something for the public good, especially if they might figure upon committees and get named in the papers occasionally, but who cannot find any good work to undertake. To such the London scheme of sending out loan exhibitions of old masters to provincial galleries may suggest an idea.

In London, says the London *Times*, there is a National Loan Collection Trust, which is now able to lend pictures, thanks to the bequest of the late William Harvey of Leeds.

The committee of the fund believe that by organization and publicity the principle of national loans could be increased and made more effective. In the past pictures of great interest, though of secondary importance, have had to be refused by the authorities of the metropolitan galleries for want of sufficient space for exhibiting purposes. It is hoped to avoid loss to the nation in the future by directing such offers to the National Loan Collection Trust to form nucleus collections of pictures representing all schools and periods. These will be constantly lent to local centres, thus forming a succession of interesting temporary exhibitions and affording variety and change with a minimum expenditure of labor and money.

Hitherto loans by the metropolitan collections to municipal galleries have for the most part consisted of one or two pictures, with the result that they have attracted less attention than if they had been of greater number. The object of those associated with the National Loan Collection Trust is to increase the number of pictures available and to lend them in substantial groups.

It is thought probable that owners of pictures to whom application to lend would be made might be found willing to present some of the pictures so lent to the National Loan Collection Trust, especially when they find that pictures, not necessarily of great monetary value but yet of real artistic interest and beauty, would be welcomed as additions to it.

The present nucleus provided by Mr. Harvey's collection consists of fifty-three pictures, mostly of the Dutch and Flemish schools. The following is the list of artists: Jan Asselyn, Ludolf Bakhuizen, Nicholas Berchem, Jan and Andries Both, Esaias Boursse, "Interior of a Courtyard," by Canaletto; Jan van der Capelle, Gonzales Coques, Aelbert Cuyp, Sir Anthony Vandyke, Cesar van Everdingen, Jean Baptiste Greuze, Francesco Guardi, Jan David de Heem, Jan van der Heyden, "Portrait of Lady Byron," by Hogarth; Jan van Huysum, Cornelius Jansen van Ceulen, Gabriel Metsu, Frans van Mieris, Abraham Mignon, Fredrick de Moucheron, Isaac de Moucheron, Aart van der Neer, Eglon van der Neer, Caspar Netscher, Adriaen Ostade, Adam Pynacher, Peter Paul Rubens, Godfred Scalken, Wilhelm Shellincks, David Teniers, Adriaon van der Velde, Willem van der Velde, Jan Weenix and Jan Wynants.

Notes and Activities in the Art World.

The following note upon Sargent is by a writer in the London *Daily Express:*

I wonder when the public will be allowed to see Mr. Sargent's war pictures. The great portrait painter spent some weeks during July and August of last year in the sector between Arras and Achiet-le-Grand, and was out every day making sketches. A section of tanks near Basseux occupied him for some days, but the artillery horse lines and the transport lines of the infantry battalions seemed to afford him the greatest pleasure. He made innumerable sketches of horses and mules. I suppose that in years to come the ennobled sons of munition millionaires will be bidding enormous sums for "Lot 102, Portrait of a Mule, by Sargent."

Upon the whole Augustus Vincent Tack is more Chinese than at the time of his last exhibition in the Kraushaar Galleries, although the example reproduced on this page, which is Italian, does not exactly bear out the statement.

But it is clear that Mr. Tack is a foreigner, or at least one of those spirits like Chatterton that refused to be chained within the period into which he happened to be born. His color is more sparkling than of yore and his touch is more crisp and certain—at least, when he paints Chinese.

One of the best of this year's canvases is the "Palace of Enchantment" for "Greenwich House" of this city. It is announced that Mr. Tack has been commissioned to do the decorations for a room in the new Government building in Winnipeg, Canada.

Alexis Jean Fournier, who was born in St. Paul, and who studied with Jean Paul Laurent and Harpignies, had the happy inspiration to paint the "haunts and homes of the men of 1830," and the series of pictures have been seen this week in the Babcock Galleries.

It is impossible for the American artist who chances upon Mr. Fournier's pictorial records, not to have nostalgia; for the homes of the French masters in almost every instance were of the sort that artists yearn for, and that some people believe absolutely necessary for artists. It was quite evident that Rousseau, for instance, did not have to go far for a motif. Everything about his house and courtyard were paintable. Daumier's home was a little poem in itself.

The instalment now on view in the Anderson Galleries is the thirteenth—the final—part of the great collection of prints formed by the late Frederic R. Halsey. Parts one to twelve, which were sold during Mr. Halsey's lifetime, realized the sum of $388,947.85. One print alone—Janinet's "L'Aveu Difficile"—sold for $11,000, the highest price ever paid for a print at auction in America. It was a great surprise to Mr. Halsey that the collection, which he had so lovingly formed during so long a period of years, proved such a good investment, and he never grew tired of expressing his surprise and gratification at the results.

The first two sessions of the present sale are devoted to English, Dutch and French mezzotints of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, mostly portraits, including rare engravings by Valentine Green, J. R. Smith and Thomas Watson after Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The third and fourth sessions include Americana and American engravings, color prints, line engravings of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a large collection of portraits of actors, artists, antiquarians, bibliophiles, diplomats, statesmen, legal, literary, medical, military, musical and scientific and other celebrities, royalty and nobility. The collection will be sold on the evenings of February 10, 11, 13 and 14.

In the February number of *Art in America*, Frederick Fairchald Sherman makes a study of George Fuller, from which comes this excerpt:

"In 1843 George Fuller wrote from his Deerfield farm to Henry Kirke Brown, then in Italy: 'I have concluded to see nature for myself, through the eye of no one else.' It may have been a decision forced upon him by circumstances that denied familiarity with the visions of other painters, but was no less a wise one and resulted eventually in his creating a kind of picture distinctively different from those with which the public was already acquainted.

"He may have underestimated the value of technic, for certainly time has made havoc with much that he did, but even when he wrote from Italy (whither he went in 1860 to study the old masters) that it pleased him 'to see how the old fellows went at their subject to tell their story, and how scumbling, light and dark shadows took care of themselves,' he added 'Yes, and drawing, too, not that these things are less important, but that something is more.' The something to which he alluded was unquestionably the idea, the subject of the picture, which to him, as to all of us, constitutes its real significance, and which, to borrow a phrase from the idiom of the theatre, an artist must 'get over,' or make the observer fully realize, if his work is to serve any useful purpose in the world. Whatever criticism may be properly applied to his method of painting, it cannot be denied that he did just that and with a manner comparable only to that of a great actor who impersonates characters upon the stage with such a semblance of life as to stir us to unaccustomed manifestations of feeling.

"According to Fuller's way of thinking, 'Color in its highest sense is a delicate sense of gradation,' and as Mr. Howells informs us in his brief sketch of the artist's life, 'He preferred to remove the object of interest in his picture a degree into its atmosphere, believing that this gave a greater chance for expression,' just as one might say that the stage provides an atmosphere for the actor in whatever role he may appear that enables him to realize more effectually its possibilities.

"This atmosphere in Fuller's canvases is adjusted always to that degree of definition he considered best suited to bring out the particular characteristics of the type pictured without discovering the obvious and inessential details of the *mise en scene*. It is because of this that the 'Nydia' is so much more than an imaginary portrait of Bulwer's heroine. She is the personification of all the tragedy of the blind made doubly real and moving by her youth and beauty. There is nothing forced about the development of the meaning of such a calamity in the picture, rather is it apparently, though not actually, modified by his removal of the figure a degree into the atmosphere. It illustrates very forcibly, I think, the logic of his theory."

Abel Pann was born in the province of Dwinsk, Russia, in 1881. Under great privations as a youth he struggled for an art education in that country. He finally went to Paris, where he resided for thirteen years studying part of the time with Bouguereau and Toudouz. At the outbreak of the war Mr. Pann was in Palestine, making drawings for a pictorial edition of the Bible. While there he was also in charge of the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem.

The present exhibition in the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, contains about 150 of his drawings and paintings, which tell the story of the war devastated countries of Poland and Lithuania and of the Jewish refugees.